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Narrating a Conscientization journey on Crime Prevention through Social Development

by

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B.A. Psychology, Universidad de Monterrey, 2011

THESIS

Submitted to the Department of Psychology

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

Master of Arts in Psychology

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Abstract

There is an increasing interest among municipalities to address crime through prevention as social development (CPSD) that acknowledges the underlying social conditions that influence the occurrence of crime. This requires a critical consciousness among community members and decision-makers of the root causes of crime and critical action that reflect that understanding. This, in turn, implies both a significant mental and cultural shift requiring personal transformation. Only then can the appropriate actions towards a preventative approach to crime be effectively fostered. For this purpose, the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council developed a community course titled *Reframing Crime, Justice, and Prevention* that sought to facilitate a space to *critically reflect* on the notions of crime, justice, and prevention; aiming to influence the participants' *critical action* towards CPSD. Critical reflection is an assessment of power (privilege and oppression) on oneself and in society, and the actions derived from this reflection are considered critical action. The combination of these two processes in a facilitated group setting is known as conscientization (Brookfield, 2016; Freire, 1974). This master's thesis sought to assess if, as a result of participating in the course, there was a shift in participants' (a) understanding of crime, justice, and prevention; and (b) intent for critical action. It also reports on the course (c) strengths and opportunities and (d) adherence to conscientization principles. A thematic analysis of interviews with course participants (N=7) and facilitators (N=3) along with a review of relevant documents (N=7) supports the contribution of the course for a deeper understanding of CPSD among participants. Group conversations and experiential activities were referred to as major contributing factors to that critical awareness. Opportunities lay on the scope of the topics and clarity of the conscientization process.

Keywords: critical consciousness, conscientization, crime prevention through social development.

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To the English speaker readers, I apologize, but I need to switch to Spanish for the following acknowledgements. I tried to write them in English, and it just was not the same. If you would like to practice some Spanish, feel free to use an online translator service or ask me and we can practice together 😊. You can also jump to Figure 1: *A step along the way*.

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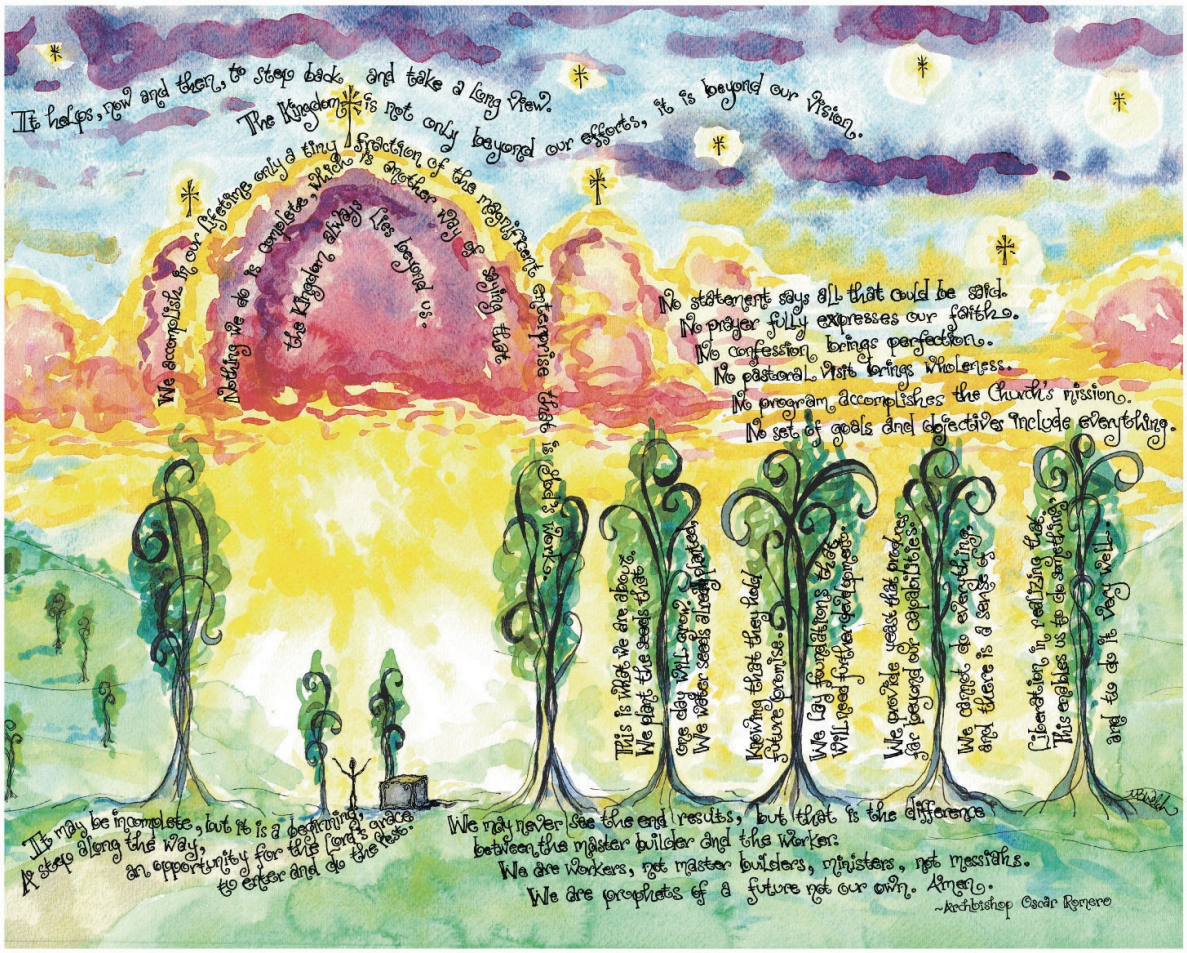
Figure 1

A Step Along the Way



"It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own. Amen." --Archbishop Oscar Romero

Note: From Archbishop Oscar Romero Prayer Art "A Step Along the Way" by Monica Welch. (https://www.etsy.com/listing/573775011/archbishop-oscar-romero-prayer-art-a). Copyright by Monica Welch. Reprinted with permission.

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Preface

I am originally from Mexico and I moved to Canada pursuing a Master's in Community Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University in 2016. The process to get here was long; the idea of graduate school started on 2012, but that is another story[1]. Before arriving to Canada, I spoke to two experienced friends who were also locals, and both had recommended the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council (WRCPC) as the place to do my practicum. Crime prevention was never a topic of interest to me but trusting my friends I applied to do my practicum at the WRCPC, which in the end transformed my views on crime prevention and on what it entails. And that is what this thesis is about, on how crime, justice, and prevention is understood, and about the processes that could help deepen those understandings in the hopes that deepened understandings would lead towards engagement and commitment for a healthier, happier, more just, and equitable community, and as a consequence, one with less crime. The present document narrates the development, implementation, and short-term outcomes of a community course implemented by the WRCPC that aimed to influence critical action by examining, reflecting, and deepening participants' understandings of crime, justice, prevention, and the root causes of crime.

[1] For the full story see: https://www.communitypsychology.com/profiles-in-community-psychology-carlos-luis-zatarain/

Introduction

The consequences of crime are far reaching and touch on the victim, the perpetrator, and the community. For the victim, there is the trauma that results from the experience, which may involve injuries, detriment to their health, economic losses, and decreased sense of safety and wellbeing (Griffiths, 2016). For the perpetrator, a punishing culture (Garland, 2001) balances crime, aside some exceptions, with "brutality, dehumanization, terror, and alienation" (Sim, 2017, p. 422). For the community at large, their overall sense of safety and wellbeing is impacted (Griffiths, 2016).

Everyone loses with crime: the victim, the perpetrator, and the community, which is why crime prevention efforts should be at the forefront. Currently, only 2% of the crime control budget is allocated for prevention (Canadian Forum for Crime Prevention, 2003; Public Safety Canada, 2018) despite the growing evidence of the cost effectiveness of prevention strategies (Waller, 2017; Waller & Weiler, 1986).

Crime prevention takes on a variety of forms based on different interpretations of why crime occurs, ranging from attributing it to a personal choice, seizing an opportunity, or being influenced by a toxic environment, to name a few (Siegel & McCormick, 2020). Acknowledging that crime is also influenced by a lack of access to housing, health, education, employment, and a caring and nurturing environment (Schneider, 2015; Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council [WRCPC], 2012) calls for a deeper conversation that unravels how crime, justice, and prevention is understood and addressed, a "fundamental change in people's consciousness" (Gil, 1996).

Seeking to facilitate a space for *critical reflection* and *action* on the topics of crime, justice, and prevention, the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council developed and

implemented a community course in 2017 titled: *Reframing Crime, Justice, and Prevention* (from herein forward referred as the course).

The course objectives were to (1) deepen participants' understanding of crime, justice, prevention, and the root causes of crime, (2) examine personal and structural biases and prejudices related to crime, justice, and prevention, (3) develop skills to critically reflect, and (4) build individual and community capacity for action (Friends of Crime Prevention, 2017). It was believed that a deeper understanding about the social structures that influence the occurrence of crime would lead participants to engage in *critical action*, that is, their critically informed community involvement.

There are multiple ways of becoming involved in the community, of participating and acting. *Critical action* is one that requires *reflecting critically* about power, to assess the opportunities available to fulfill needs, at an individual and community level; and the degree to which others have access to the same opportunities as oneself or not, which helps identify privilege and oppression (Brookfield, 2016; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002).

Take for example someone, who decides to volunteer at a food bank. This is certainly a way of becoming involved in the community, of supporting one another. To *critically reflect* is to acknowledge: am I in need of accessing the food bank? If not, do I understand the privilege that allows me to have food on the table, and the oppression that leaves many others without education, health services, housing, or employment and, as a consequence, in need of a food bank. To *critically act* is to mobilize with the insights from *reflecting critically*; to take part, to advocate, to collaborate; striving to alter the oppressive conditions and contributing to the wellbeing of us all (Brookfield, 2016; Diers, 2016; Freire, 1974).

The combined process of reflecting and acting critically with others is known as *conscientization* (Freire, 1974), which was deemed by the developers as needed for contributing to the crime prevention through social development (CPSD) approach. Crime prevention through social development (CPSD) recognizes that crime is influenced by a lack of access to fundamental human needs such as food, housing, health, education, employment, livable wages, and a caring and nurturing environment (Schneider, 2015; WRCPC, 2012).

The decision by the WRCPC to utilize a community course approach came after realizing that facilitating a deep understanding of crime, justice, and prevention among community members that participated in crime prevention events needed a longer more in-depth process than the ones previously used. Prior to 2017, the engagement unit had led multiple community events related to the aforementioned topics and participants were able to learn and discuss the topics with other community members. However, given the length of the events (two to three hours each), the participants were not able to do an in-depth exploration of the root causes of crime, using an ecological framework, and learning from each other's experiences. This realization by the coordinator of the engagement unit motivated the idea of a different approach: a community course.

The course focused on three main topics: crime, justice, and prevention, and consisted of seven 2 ½-hour sessions. The main topics were explored in-depth, allocating one session for each. The fourth session emphasized experiential learning, and participants were able to choose to participate in one of two community events, which related to the topics of the course. The fifth session provided a space to deconstruct the community events as well as to begin a conversation about the learnings from the course. The sixth session followed a gallery format, displaying flip charts around the room that contained reflections and learnings from previous sessions. These

visual representations aided the group in summarizing their learnings and assessing how to share them with the broader community, which was planned during the seventh and final session of the course. Three months after the conclusion of the course, the participants led a community event to share their learnings, through activities that sparked reflection and open dialogue.

The research objectives of this thesis were to (a) conduct a formative and outcome-oriented program evaluation of the community course facilitated by the WRCPC, looking at how participants' notions of crime, justice, and prevention are deepened or not, through the process of participating in the course, and (b) explore the effectiveness of a conscientization process in becoming aware of the roles power and inequality have on the way participants understand crime, justice, and prevention.

The research questions that this thesis sought to address focused on (1) the incorporation of conscientization principles in the course development and implementation, (2) elements from the course that contributed to a deeper understanding on the topics of crime, justice, and prevention, and (3) assessing the course's contribution to critical consciousness related to crime prevention through social development. A thematic analysis of interviews of course participants (N=7) and facilitators (N=3), as well as a review of documents reporting on the development and implementation of the course (N=7) took place to meet these objectives.

In the *background* section of this document I seek to provide an understanding of all relevant aspects pertaining to the course development and this research, clarifying the need for developing a course that focuses on the topics of crime, justice, and prevention; and the use of *conscientization* methods in order to influence *critical action.*

I begin by providing a brief overview on the rationale and theories related to crime prevention approaches and distinguish among five of them. Focusing on CPSD, I introduce it as the approach espoused by the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council (WRCPC), and introduce the organization and the unit within it that developed and implemented the community course, while providing context about the process that led to choosing a course and conscientization methodologies.

In presenting *conscientization* I focus on seven conditions discussed by Freire (1974) followed by a description of the course development and content reviewed in each of the sessions, seeking to provide the reader with a clearer understanding of the structure, themes, and activities that took place. The community course section concludes by presenting the need for research that reports on the process that was followed and the perceived outcomes from participants and facilitators.

Background

Taking a preventive approach for addressing crime requires a comprehensive understanding of it, the people involved, the rationale behind it, the underlying motives and conditions that perpetuate it. There is no agreement regarding these contributing factors, as some crime theories (Classical, Positivist) will place the focus on the individual, their character traits, choices, and value systems. Other theories (Sociological) will focus on the social environment and learned behavior that normalize crime as a result of not having the means to fulfill their needs. In addition, beyond the individual and their learned behaviors, Marxist and Conflict theories emphasize the societal structures that create the conditions for crime to occur (Siegel & McCormick, 2020).

Crime prevention strategies would, in turn, reflect an understanding of crime (from the Classical, Positivist, Sociological, Marxist, and Conflict theories) and will emphasize *who* — could or has committed a crime— *how*, *where*, and *why*. For example, a crime prevention strategy that focuses on individuals that might engage in criminal behaviour is emphasizing *who,* hence draw from a Classical or Positivist theory (Siegel & McCormick, 2020), whereas another strategy that seeks to provide better lightening in areas where the absence of street lights has been a factor for the occurrence of crime (e.g., a dark alley, where consistent robberies have been reported) could be emphasizing *where* or *how,* and therefore draw from the Crime Pattern Theory (Schneider, 2015).

Crime prevention strategies can also incorporate a mix of theoretical influences, for example, programs that focus on community building and skills development are placing a focus on the individual that might engage in criminal behaviour, and also are contributing to developing skills which might exert a positive influence in their relationships and employment opportunities, hence draw from Classical, Positivist, and Sociological theories (Siegel & McCormick, 2020).

Schneider (2015) identified five approaches to preventing crime, consistent with classification by the United Nations (2010): (1) situational crime prevention, (2) community crime prevention, (3) recidivism prevention, (4) police and the criminal justice system, and (5) crime prevention through social development.

(1) *Situational crime prevention* focuses on deterring crime by identifying the situations in which crime occurs and designing interventions that address them (for example, shoplifting prevention strategies including adding chips to clothes that would trigger an alarm when exiting a store without paying for the product). (2) *Community crime prevention* focuses on the people:

in regard to their development (socially, economically, and physically) and the actions taken collectively to prevent crime (i.e., skills development programs, neighborhood watch programs). (3) *Recidivism prevention* focuses on deterring offenders from re-offending, by means of treatment, social integration, and providing alternative opportunities.

(4) *Police and the Criminal Justice System* refers to the approaches led by the police or justice system, which are proactive in nature, have the community in its base, and are oriented towards solving problems. Some examples are community policing and drug courts (Schneider, 2015; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2010). Community policing involves partnering with the community, seeking to better understand the issues, leading to changes in how they are being addressed (Community Oriented Policing Services, 2014). Drug Courts seek to provide alternatives to incarceration, such as addiction treatments and community service for those experiencing addiction to drugs and being charged for an offense related to it (Department of Justice, 2017, 2019).

(5) Finally, *crime prevention through social development* (CPSD) focuses on addressing the root causes of crime: a series of social, economic, biological, and family related factors, which have been associated with the occurrence of crime (Schneider, 2015; WRCPC, 2012). For example, growing up in an environment where there is limited access to resources, such as housing, employment, livable wages, food security, education, health, and a loving and caring environment, could lead a person to being more likely to engage in criminal behaviour to meet basic needs (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2010; WRCPC, 2017; Wilkins et al., 2014).

About the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council

Embracing the social development approach to crime prevention, the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council (WRCPC, 2017) was created in 1994. Their mission is to "advance ideas and actions that alleviate root causes of crime and improve social well-being" (WRCPC, 2017, p. 11). The WRCPC is currently comprised of forty council members that "represent the community-at-large, social service agencies, education, public health, municipal planning, justice, corrections, police, community and neighbourhood support agencies and political representatives", who "bring together a broad range of community perspectives and work together to address the root causes of crime" (WRCPC, 2019).

Alleviating the root causes of crime is no simple task, and it certainly takes more than one organization to deal with. It needs involvement of a community, which is why the WRCPC is comprised of 40+ community representatives, who are supported by a backbone organization of core staff. Nevertheless, even that approach is limited in its scope. The whole community is needed by communicating with one another, understanding together what is happening on the ground and what needs to happen for things to improve; advocating collectively for the needed changes for a healthier, more just, and equitable society. According to this approach to crime prevention, the community plays a significant role and communities' active involvement is needed in order to address those root causes of crime, which is why the WRCPC has a dedicated unit for that specific purpose: to engage the community.

From its inception, the engagement unit at the WRCPC has developed a number of initiatives looking to involve community members (WRCPC, 2015a, 2015b). These have ranged from town halls, symposiums, round tables, porch chats, workshops, Jane Walks; which are community driven and led tours that allow community to re-visit our history and values (Jane's

Walk, n.d.), and even scavenger hunts to name a few. These events have given the community an opportunity to talk about topics relevant to them and do so in a facilitated and safe environment. Examples of topics include (1) an exploration of the opioid crisis and its effects, (2) reflecting and becoming an ally for members of the Indigenous and LGBTQ communities, (3) exploring alternatives to the criminalization of mental health, (4) learning from Iceland's model for youth substance misuse prevention, (5) spirituality's' impact on individuals and the community, (6) learning from the experiences of those who have been homeless, incarcerated, and (7) exploring alternatives towards the creation of inclusive and safe spaces to name a few (Friends of Crime Prevention, n.d.).

Years into the position, one of the community engagement coordinators came to recognize that a deeper and longer process was needed in order to convey what crime prevention from a social development perspective truly entails. While the events organized were purposeful and had some impact, the limited time of the events (usually two to three-hours) made it difficult to engage in deep dialogue related to the various aspects of crime prevention through social development. This led the community engagement unit to the idea of developing a community course focused on crime prevention as social development in 2017 (J. Metzger, personal communication, April 19, 2017).

In developing the course, the facilitators relied on their personal experiences with *conscientization* processes and given its participatory, self-reflective, critical, and utopic nature, it was deemed as the most adequate process to use for participants to reflect critically about their notions and biases regarding crime, justice, prevention, and the root causes of crime. One experience in particular was shared by two facilitators: The Local Democracy Diploma by The Working Centre, which became a model for the course development.

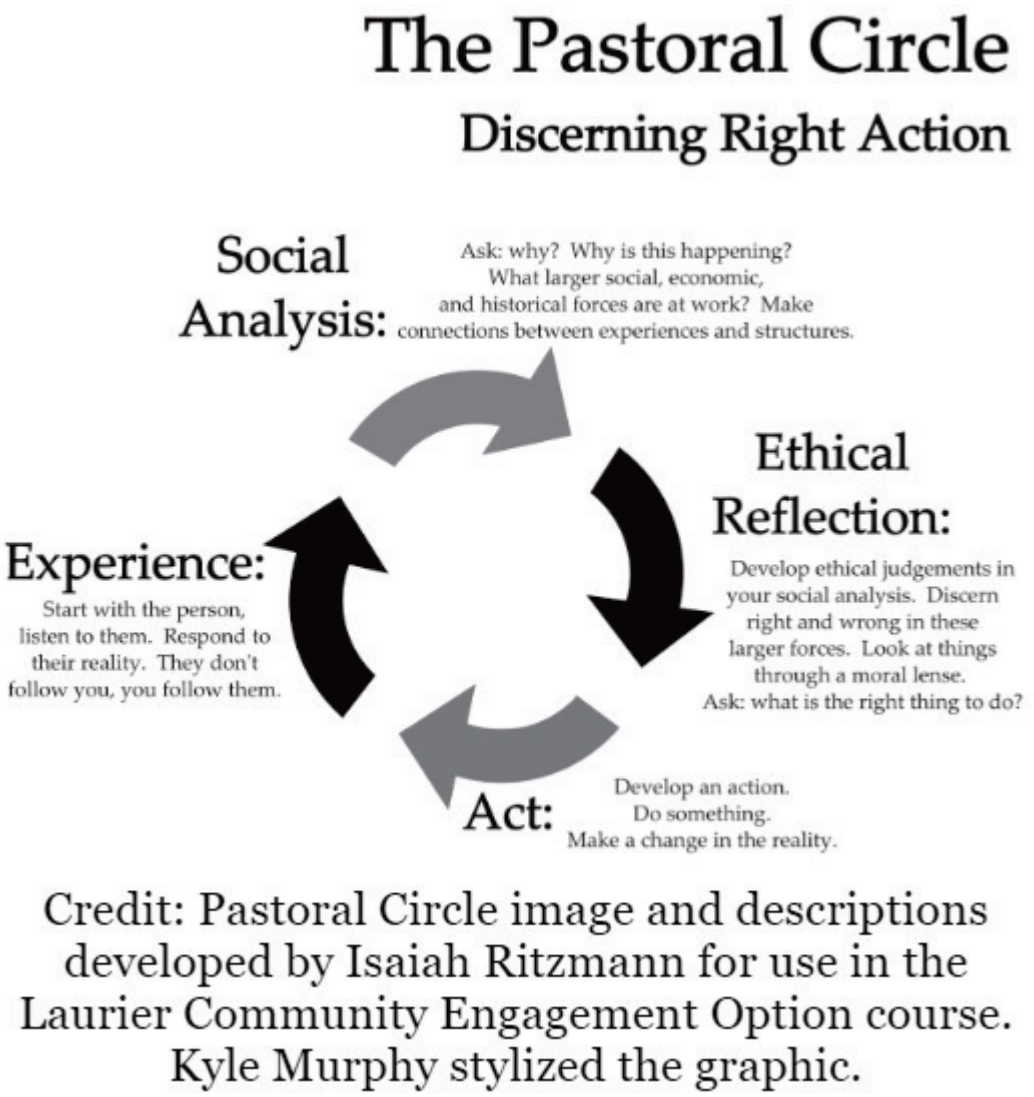
The Working Centre is a local non-profit organization in Kitchener, Ontario, founded in 1982, and as of now, leads over 35 different projects, serving 1,500 people a day, with the help of over 500 volunteers and 150 workers (The Working Centre, n.d.). The variety and impact of their projects, which include resources for employment, access to housing, food, health, clothing, mobility, technology services, community building spaces, and collaborative learning, can best be understood when looking at their guiding virtues: *work as gift, living simply, serving others, rejecting status, building community*, and *creating community tools*, and how they are placed into practice through *The Pastoral Circle* (Mancini & Mancini, 2015).

The Pastoral Circle (see Figure 2) is a cycle that looks into the experience of those they serve, does a social analysis of the structures involved in the experience, ethically reflects on the right thing to do from the perspective of their virtues, and follows by concrete action looking to improve the experience, setting the cycle in motion again (Mancini & Mancini, 2015).

The Working Centre was introduced to the *Pastoral Circle* by the Jesuits in Guelph, who were in turn introduced to it in Washington by Joe Holland (I. Ritzmann, personal communication, July 29, 2019), who along with Peter Henriot, S.J. first presented it in their book *Social Analysis: linking faith and justice*, where they mention how it is also referred to as *circle of praxis,* "because it emphasizes the on-going relationship between reflection and action" (Holland & Henriot, 1983, p. 8). They also acknowledge that behind the notion and development of the construct of *praxis* is Paulo Freire and his work, giving him the credit for it (Holland, 2005; Holland & Henriot, 1983).

Figure 2

The Pastoral Circle



Note. From "Transition to common work: building community at the Working Centre." by Joe and Stephanie Mancini, p. 112. Copyright 2015 by Wilfrid Laurier University Press. Reprinted with permission.

Conscientization

Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educator, advocate, and philosopher, whose life and work had a profound impact on the lives of many who work for "the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love" (Freire, 2005, p. 40). During his first day working as an attorney he decided to quit practice, after meeting with a dentist whose house was being taken by the bank he represented. This marked a journey that would lead him to the country fields to engage in an educational *praxis* aimed at fostering liberation instead of conformity. His work led him to prison and then exile for over 14 years, coming back to serve as Minister of Education for Sao Paulo (Freire, 1993). He was awarded the Unesco Prize 1986 for Peace Education (UNESCO, 1988).

Paulo Freire is generally perceived as the person who developed the *conscientization* construct. Freire himself, however, recognizes that he was not the original person developing it (Freire, 1974, p. 29). He attributes the original development to a group of professors in the Superior Institute for Brazilian studies (ISEB), specifically to philosopher Álvaro Viera Pinto and sociologist Alberto Guerrero Ramos, and translated to English and French by Archbishop Hélder Câmara, who also helped in its dissemination (Freire, 1974).

Conscientization is a facilitated, action-oriented group process that leads to a deeper and richer understanding, construction, and transformation of reality (Freire, 1974). Generally, it is presented with three components: (1) critical reflection, (2) political efficacy, and (3) critical action (Jemal, 2017; Watts et al., 2011). As previously discussed, critical reflection involves an assessment of power in oneself and in society, and the actions derived from that assessment are the critical actions. Political efficacy is the acknowledgement of the capacity to affect change (Watts et al., 2011).

Although the three earlier components are the ones usually mentioned when referring to what *conscientization* encompasses, there is no consensus in how the conscientization construct is defined and operationalized (Jemal, 2017). To have a sense about the complication of reaching a consensus, by 1987, there were over 6,000 titles (books and articles) referring to Freire's ideas in English alone (Gadotti, 1991), which undoubtedly presents a challenge in reaching a consensus. In addition, "methods directly related to conscientization, specifically generated to produce that process are difficult to find, if nonexistent" (Montero, 2009, p. 74).

For the purposes of this research, I focus on six conditions referred to by Freire in his 1974 book: Conscientization: theory and practice. These conditions become fundamental from my perspective, for a conscientization process to occur. The conditions referred are: (1) *assuming an epistemological position,* (2) *continuous unveiling of reality,* (3) *adopting a historical consciousness and commitment,* (4) *assuming an utopian position and praxis,* (5) *coding and decoding,* and (6) *conscientization as a never-ending process* (Freire, 1974).

Freire (1974) recognizes that it is our human quality, which allows us to take a step back and contemplate reality by means of our consciousness. He then describes how this first look towards reality is determined by our historical, psychological, societal, family, and biological conditions. Based on this, he concludes that in order for one to view reality from a critical standpoint, one would need first to assume an *epistemological position*, which is to acknowledge one's own historical, psychological, societal, family, biological groundings, understanding that reality in itself is too complex for an individual to fully comprehend on their own (Freire, 1974; Kraemer Tebes, 2016; Noriega Méndez & Gutiérrez Millán, 1995).

Once a person is epistemologically grounded, then they can move towards a critical view of reality. Without an epistemological grounding, a person only has a naïve understanding of

reality, according to Freire. Thus, a primary condition for any given group going through a conscientization process is to assume an epistemological position.

The *continuous unveiling of reality* seeks to describe the notion that one does not get to a point where a given aspect of reality is completely understood, but instead, given the complexity of reality itself, it needs to be continuously *unveiled,* that is, more is known about reality by means of conscientization (Freire, 1974). This component encourages us not to become complacent, that when a new understanding of reality is achieved, to continue questioning it.

Conscientization also invites individuals to *assume a historical consciousness and commitment* in recognizing that the reality in which we live has been socially constructed and inherited, and that we have the option of either conforming to that reality or transforming it for the betterment of current and future generations: a Utopia (Freire, 1974).

For Freire, Utopia is a process that involves the imagination of the possible, and the reality in which humanizing structures are at play (Freire, 1974). He distinguishes between two types of structures operating in society: humanizing and dehumanizing and speaks to how education can serve to facilitate both. Education becomes a humanizing structure when it serves the purpose of understanding one's reality, how we got here, and how we can change things for the better. But education becomes a dehumanizing structure when it serves the purpose of indoctrinating those being educated into accepting and perpetuating the status quo (Freire, 1974; Roberts, 2015). *Praxis* is the action of denouncing de-humanizing structures and announcing humanizing structures (Freire, 1974).

Coding refers to the subject of analysis from reality that is being discussed within the group, it could be a visual representation from a known existential situation to the group.

Decoding is the process by which the individuals within the group bring meaning to the code, expressing in it their vision of the world. It is by learning from one another that our understanding of a given aspect of reality is transcended (Freire, 1974).

Freire (1974) also sees conscientization as a never-ending process, recognizing that the new realities that are achieved by means of this process would also need to be critically reflected upon using the conscientization framework. Ignacio Martín-Baró S.J., martyr of the global south, explains conscientization as:

> The human being is transformed through changing his or her reality, by means of an active process of dialogue in which there is a gradual decoding of the world, as people grasp the mechanisms of oppression and dehumanisation. This opens up new possibilities for action where new knowledge of the surrounding reality leads to new self-understanding about the roots of what people are at present and what they could become (cited in Kagan et al., 2011, p. 187).

The inherent role of love, humility, and faith

Towards the end of my review of Freire's texts focused on the topic of conscientization I came across a podcast from Dr. Antonia Darder (2018) in which she decided to rename her Social Justice lecture at Santa Monica College from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed for today* to *Pedagogy of Love.* This idea of *love* captured my attention and led to a further exploration that allowed me to see the fundamental *relational* aspect of *conscientization*, grounded on *love, humility, and faith.* In Freire's (2005) words:

> Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people (2005, p. 89)…If I do not love the world—if I do not love life—if I do not love

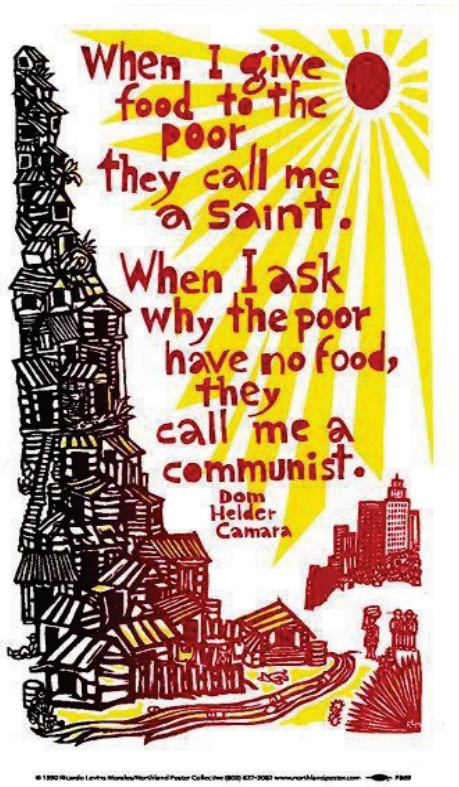
> people—I cannot enter into dialogue…On the other hand, dialogue cannot exist without humility. The naming of the world, through which people constantly re-create that world, cannot be an act of arrogance…Dialogue further requires an intense faith in humankind, faith in their power to make and remake, to create and re-create, faith in their vocation to be more fully human (which is not the privilege of an elite, but the birthright of all) (2005, p. 90).

If *dialogue* is the main vehicle for *conscientization,* then *love, humility,* and *faith* are the indispensable fuels for it. Caring for one another, acknowledging my ego and limitations, believing in humankind and our potential to transform the reality for the better; are the indispensable conditions to do it (Freire, 1979).

And with the idea of a better reality for addressing crime at its roots, acknowledging the value of each human being, and the pervasive conditions in society that contribute to the occurrence of crime, the community course *Reframing Crime, Justice, and Prevention* was developed. Aiming to incorporate *conscientization* principles in its methods, facilitating a dialogue among participants in a trustful, empathetic and respectful environment, sharing their views and life experiences around crime, justice, and prevention, in an effort to identify the roles that power and inequality play in shaping that reality. The idea being that once those roles are laid out, there are better opportunities for addressing those. To do so, the course would facilitate conversations aimed at looking at issues from different perspectives and would incorporate experiences for participants to place the conversations into context.

Figure 3

"When I Give to the Poor."



Note. Quote by Archbishop Helder Camara, referred by Freire as the one who helped disseminate the construct of conscientization. From "When I Give to the Poor" - Ricardo Levins Morales by Ricardo Levins Morales (http://omeka.macalester.edu/courses/russ151/items/show/31). In the public domain.

About the Community Course

The course was developed over a period of six months by a group of seven Friends of Crime Prevention: Sue Weare, Shelley Adams, Sandra Reimer, Daniel Bader, Barry Cull, Eleanor McGrath, and Juanita Metzger, one of WRCPC's community engagement coordinators (J. Metzger, personal communication, April 19, 2017). Friends of Crime Prevention is an initiative of the WRCPC that enables community members interested in crime prevention and community building to interact, dialogue, and learn together. The course also incorporated

contributions from the lead facilitator Dianne Heise Bennett, guest facilitator David Siladi and me.

The course was titled *Reframing Crime, Justice, and Prevention* and it had the objective of (1) deepening participants' understanding of crime, justice, prevention, and the root causes of crime, (2) examining personal and structural biases and prejudices related to crime, justice, and prevention, (3) developing skills to critically reflect, and (4) building individual and community capacity for action (Friends of Crime Prevention, 2017). The course consisted of seven 2 ½-hour sessions that took place between October and December 2017.

I participated in several meetings with the WRCPC staff during which they worked to clarify the purpose and rationale of the community course. In those meetings, I provided input regarding conscientization methodologies for the purpose of incorporating these into the community course, specifically related to three elements: 1) sharing of life experiences, 2) sharing of understandings of reality based on life experiences (specifically around crime, justice, and prevention), and 3) identifying the interactions of power and inequality into the understanding of those realities. Additionally, specific resources were shared with the staff related to conscientization, focusing on the *critical consciousness* process outlined by Kagan, et.al. (2011), the model for critical community practice from Butcher, et.al.(2007), and Goodman's (2011) recommendations for critical reflection.

I also participated in various meetings with the WRCPC, which led to the development of a logic model for the community course, created by Elin Moorlag Silk, another staff member at the WRCPC. This model is displayed in *Figure 4*. Staff members of the WRCPC agreed to conduct an evaluation looking into participants' reactions to activities, topics, and structure of the

course, while my research would focus on the short-term outcomes for participants and facilitators, on their understanding and intent for action.

The invitation to participate in the course was posted online on the webpage of the Friends of Crime Prevention who were the initial population of interest for the course, although it was also opened for community members who expressed an interest in learning on the topics of crime, justice, and prevention (Friends of Crime Prevention, 2017). Social media and word of mouth were other venues for the community to learn about the course. Ten people signed up initially for the course, but there were two cancellations - one before the course started and one after the first session - resulting in a total of eight course participants.

About the participants

Each participant completed a registration form in which they expressed their interest in taking the community course, their expectations of it, and their potential contributions to it. While specific demographic information was not collected, some participants shared certain information regarding their background. Most participants described themselves as being employed, most doing community development work, on health and equity related fields, some within the Justice System, or legal services. A few mentioned having some knowledge of community groups doing crime prevention work; or having some level of crime prevention experience and or training.

The participants mentioned as their motivation to take the course as being interested in learning new perspectives and insights regarding crime prevention and justice, as well as alternatives to and within the Criminal Justice System. One participant expressed having an interest in a comprehensive learning experience that considers regional context, lived experience, and systemic factors. Participants also expressed an interest in a dialogue on how to create safer

and more inclusive communities, especially with others who have a different perspective from them.

Participants also mentioned valuing aspects of diversity, acknowledging that reality cannot be contained by one person. They expressed having diverse opinions as invigorating for their learning. In addition, participants expressed an interest in developing ideas and suggestions for community change, and in finding ways for preventing crime.

Participants also responded to a question regarding what they thought they could contribute to the course. Sharing knowledge from their experiences, personally, professionally, or as shared by those who have been in prison or experienced crime, was one of the contributions mentioned. Openness to new ideas and sharing was another contribution mentioned. Participants expressed an openness to learning and sharing with one another, in a respectful environment. Participants come from a variety of walks of life, some with more professional experience than others, some with direct experiences with hardship and poverty, some in closer interaction with those affected by inequality and prejudice.

Course sessions

In addition to the course objectives of deepening participants perspectives on the topics of crime, justice, and prevention, the course facilitators and I had an interest in assessing the method used (conscientization) and the effects on the course and the participants, which resulted in this thesis narrated on this document. Participants were made aware of the research embedded in the community course, and of my dual role as researcher and course facilitator. They were invited to participate in the research, and I received consent from all participants to take notes during the sessions and to make use of the session's outcomes and materials as part of the data.

The first session focused on describing the course, integration of the group, and deconstructing the concept of crime. In describing the course, an overview of the topics to be covered in each of the sessions was presented. For the group integration, time was allocated for participants to engage in dialogue with each other. The group also developed agreements for facilitating a respectful learning experience. To deconstruct the concept of crime, the participants provided their definition of crime, followed by a facilitated dialogue aimed at identifying the underlying assumptions in the definitions. The session finalized with an exploration on why crimes are committed, looking into it from an ecological perspective, with a video of a case aimed at touching on the points discussed.

The second session focused on the concept of justice. A guest facilitator led the group into identifying personal and societal assumptions about justice and its purpose. Following the conversation, the group was led into exploring three venues, through a Jane's Walk: (1) the Governor's House, current home of the WRCPC and former home of the "gaoler" or jailor (2) the Waterloo Region Courthouse, and (3) the Community Justice Initiatives office, which focuses on restorative justice. The group then discussed the differences in approaches to justice and the value system and rationale behind them.

A staff member from the WRCPC was invited as a guest speaker for the third session, and began with a mindfulness exercise, followed by a presentation on the topic of prevention. In the presentation, the speaker distinguished various types of preventive work: (a) indicated, which focuses on a target population that is more likely to exhibit the behaviour that is the focus of the preventive work; (b) selective, which identifies groups that have greater risk of engaging in the focus behaviour, and (c) universal, which has the entire population as its focus, and that is similar to primary prevention, which seeks to reduce the likelihood of developing the

behaviour/condition in the first place (Kloos et al., 2012). The facilitator introduced an additional type, (d) primordial prevention, which looks beyond the population, into removing the risk factors altogether.

Following the presentation, the group was divided into facilitated sub-groups to identify how a social issue could be addressed from the various levels of prevention discussed. The session ended with the whole group sharing their perspectives and learnings, as well as the challenges identified for prioritizing prevention, and adopting it as a value.

Having explored the three main topics of the course (crime, justice, and prevention) the participants chose from two events to participate for the fourth session. One event was the Community Justice Initiatives Stride Symposium, which in three days explored the reality of women in Canadian prisons, their challenges in reintegrating into the community, their strengths, and how the community and organizations in the region could help to address these issues. The second event was the 39th Annual Justice Dinner, organized by the WRCPC. During this event, Ted Wachtel, Founder of the International Institute for Restorative Practices in Pennsylvania, along with Chris Cowie, Executive Director of Community Justice Initiatives, recollected experiences and learnings from their restorative approach journey, and encouraged the participants to imagine Waterloo Region as a restorative region.

After attending the community events, the participants gathered for the fifth session and shared their experiences and learnings with each other, following the *what, so what, now what* model. *What* did they experience? *So, what* does it mean? Did any ideas change as a result of participating in these events? *Now what?* Do participants see any action items resulting from these ideas and learnings? Following their shared learnings, the participants revisited their assumptions related to crime, justice, and prevention, and engaged in dialogue to assess where

these assumptions come from, if reality confirms those, and what meaningful change would look like.

The sixth session was devoted to reflecting on the experiences from the course and began with a group dynamic (musical chairs). During this part, the facilitators led participants into assessing the assumptions surrounding the dynamic, and how these create the conditions for some to be "in" or "out." Following this conversation, the group engaged in a second dynamic (musical circle), in which all participants got to choose a musical instrument and collaborate for creating a melody. After this dynamic process the group walked around the room, which was set in a gallery style, and looked at the flip charts from past sessions where their learnings had been recorded. The lead facilitator engaged the group in summarizing their learnings.

To conclude the course, the participants explored alternatives for sharing their learnings, which was done in the seventh session. They agreed to develop group exercises in which they could engage the community in reflecting on issues of crime, justice, and prevention. The participants met a few times after the finalization of the course to plan in detail the community event, which took place on February 28th, 2018 at the Kitchener Public Library. It was attended by 50 people from the community.

Each of the sessions involved various elements: (a) check-ins, (b) central topic, (c) small group discussion, (d) break, (e) large group discussion, and (f) additional resources. The sessions would begin with a *check-in*, allowing participants to share where they were in their journey, and talk about any significant experiences between sessions related to the topics. The *central topics* guided the activities for each session, and were (1) crime, (2) justice, (3) prevention, (4) community event, (5) reflection, (6) learnings, and (7) action. *Small group discussions* allowed for participation and deeper conversations, the *breaks* facilitated the group integration over tea

and snacks, and the *large group discussions* contributed to enriching perspectives in learning from one another and bringing it all together. The *additional resources* were given at the end of each session and included (1) a collage with key learnings and reflective questions, (2) articles related to the topics. Participants were encouraged to write in the journals provided to them at the beginning of the course.

Course logic model and initial evaluation

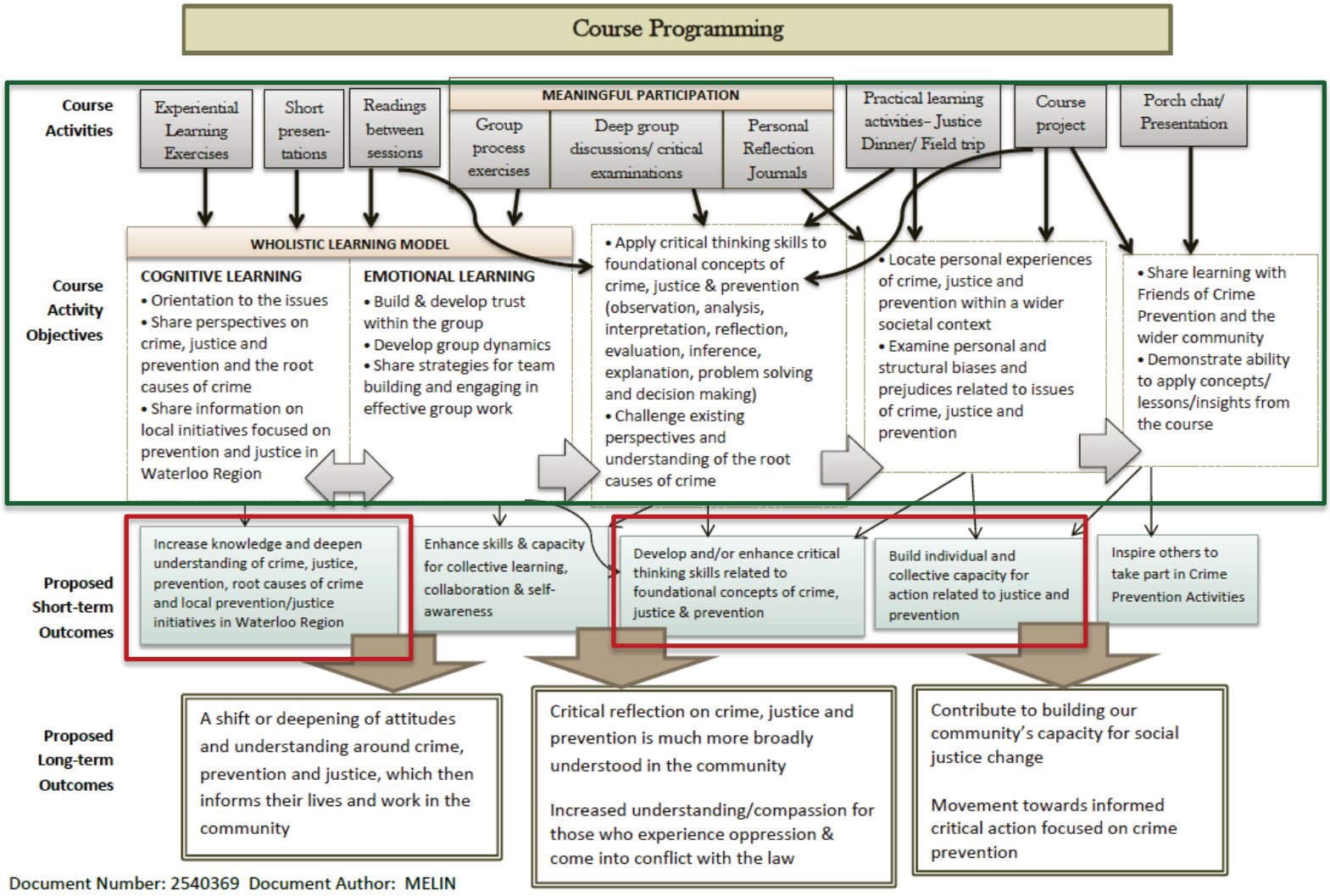
A logic model of the course, created by Elin Moorlag Silk for the WRCPC, is depicted below on *Figure 4.* Its creation was the result of various meetings among course developers and facilitators, in which the course objectives along with the proposed processes to achieve them were discussed.

My thesis focus was to be on: (1) the process followed by the course: conscientization, (2) the effects of the course as reported by participants, specifically related to their *understanding* and *intent for action*. The research objectives and questions are aligned with the above, seeking to (a) assess the community course via a formative and outcome-oriented evaluation, and (b) explore the effectiveness of a conscientization process.

In addition to the evaluation presented on this thesis document, the WRCPC conducted an evaluation in December 2017, right after the course completion, focusing on the perceived effectiveness of the course activities for achieving the objectives. Marked in green on *Figure 3* below depicts the focus of the evaluation conducted by the WRCPC, and in red the focus of my thesis, one complementing the other.

Figure 4

Logic Model of the Community Course



Marking in red is the research focus of this thesis

The knowledge generated from the evaluation by the WRCPC (in green above on Figure 4) provided insights into participants' reactions to the proposed activities and structure of the course, but left questions unanswered in regards to their views of crime, justice, and prevention; and assessing if the course had any effect on their understanding or intent for action. In addition, the process for developing and facilitating the course was not reported in the WRCPC evaluation. It is with the purpose of addressing these questions that this thesis was developed. Figure 5 below depicts the linkage between the proposed short-term outcomes of the community course as expressed in the logic model, and the research from this thesis.

Figure 5

Linkage between course outcomes and thesis objectives and questions

COMMUNITY COURSE LOGIC MODEL	THESIS			
Proposed Short-term Outcomes	**#**	**OBJECTIVES**	**#**	**QUESTIONS (summary)**
Increase knowledge and deepen understanding of crime, justice, prevention, root causes of crime and local prevention/justice initiatives in Waterloo Region	**1**	To **conduct** a formative and outcome-oriented program **evaluation** of the community course facilitated by the WRCPC, looking at how **participants' notions** of crime, justice, and prevention are **deepened or not**, through the process of **participating in the course**	**1**	**The incorporation of conscientization principles** in the course development and implementation, and **challenges from implementation.**
			2	**Elements from the course that contributed to a deeper understanding** on the topics of crime, justice, and prevention
Develop and/or enhance critical thinking skills related to foundational concepts of crime, justice & prevention	**2**	Explore **the effectiveness of a** conscientization process **in becoming aware of the roles power and inequality have** on the way participants understand **crime, justice, and prevention.**	**3**	**Assessing the course's contribution** to critical consciousness related to crime prevention through social development
Build individual and collective capacity for action related to justice and prevention				

Research Objectives

The purpose of this thesis is:

1. To conduct a formative and outcome-oriented program evaluation of the community course facilitated by the WRCPC, looking at how participants' notions of crime, justice, and prevention are deepened or not, through the process of participating in the course.
2. Explore the perceived effectiveness of a conscientization process in becoming aware of the roles power and inequality have on the way participants understand crime, justice, and prevention.

Research Questions

The following research questions look into the perceived impact and outcomes:

1. In what ways does the community course reflect principles of conscientization methodology in the way it is conceptualized and implemented?
    a. What barriers or what challenges did the workshop facilitators and participants experience in applying conscientization methodology?
2. What elements were identified as relevant to the participants and facilitators of the course in the process for deepening an understanding of crime, justice, and prevention (incorporating how power and inequality shape those realities)?
3. In what ways does the community course contribute to the development of critical consciousness related to crime prevention through social development?
    a. Did participants deepen their understanding of crime, justice, and prevention through participation in the course?
    b. In what ways does that shift in understanding reflect critical consciousness related to crime prevention through social development?

Methods

Paradigm

Following the values of "self-determination and participation, community and inclusion, social justice and accountability to oppressed groups, and reflexivity" (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010, p. 299), the paradigm I manifested in my work and methods is the *transformative paradigm* (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010), which acknowledges that the observable reality is influenced by various structures and factors such as history, culture, politics, economics, and gender to name a few. Understanding these influences sets the basis for looking at reality from a lens that incorporates the roles of power and oppression, with the ultimate goal of transforming it, which is accomplished collectively among researchers and community (Riemer et al., 2020). Seeking to understand these influences from the perspective of each participant, I opted for individual interviews, allowing them to elaborate their responses. In addition, throughout the research there was openness to understand the conscientization construct from different perspectives and implementations, and at the same time to look into the rationale of the course implementation from different angles.

Design

The community course from its development, implementation, and outcomes as reported by the participants and facilitators six months upon the conclusion of the course constitute the *single-case* unit of analysis for this thesis, which seeks to *describe* and *explain*, the effects of the course on participants' and facilitators' understanding and intent for action using a mix-methods approach. A case study is a distinctive qualitative research approach that seeks to provide an in-depth exploration that could be descriptive or explanatory (Yin, 2018).

In addition, recognizing my involvement with the WRCPC and their staff, and continued collaboration in the development, implementation as a co-facilitator, and the assessment of the course presented in this document, this master thesis follows a community-engaged research approach that incorporates the key stakeholders (WRCPC) in a collaborative process for identifying, addressing, and assessing the topic of focus (Riemer et al., 2020). Staff and members from the WRCPC, facilitators, and I jointly reflected about our experiences, which led to proposing a course of action (conscientization embedded into a community course) that was put into praxis, seeking to affect social change. This research constitutes the evaluation of that process (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010).

Data collection methods

Interviews, focus group, documentation pertaining to the development, implementation, and outcomes of the course, and my reflective notes constituted the main data collection methods (Yin, 2018). The list below provides a description of each.

1. *Interviews:* Seven individual interviews with course participants took place between May and June of 2018, three months after the community event organized by the participants, which occurred on February 28, 2018 and six months after the conclusion of the community course on December 7, 2017. The interviews were audio-recorded and conducted by me. The participants chose the location, four opting for an office within Wilfrid Laurier University, two choosing their places of employment and one the Kitchener Public Library. All locations ensured a private setting for confidentiality. Sixty minutes were booked for each of the interviews, the shortest one lasting 37 minutes and the longest 79 minutes with a mean of 54 minutes. The interview protocol was developed with guidance from my supervisor and thesis committee, and in dialogue with staff at the

WRCPC, which ensured that it focused on three central aspects: (1) understanding (e.g.: How would you define crime? justice? prevention?) (2) process, (e.g.: Were there specific course activities or discussion that contributed more to your current understanding of crime, justice, or prevention?) and (3) intent for action, (e.g.: what changes have you seen or expect to see (since the course started) in how you view crime in the context of your paid or volunteer work or your life more generally? How do you think the course might have played a role in these changes?). Appendix B contains the protocol used for the interviews.

2. *Focus group:* One focus group was conducted with three course facilitators on May 9, 2018, two months after the community event and five from the final session of the course. It was audio-recorded and facilitated by me. The duration of it was one hour and 42 minutes. It took place at a private room at Wilfrid Laurier University. In developing the protocol for the focus group, various meetings with my supervisor took place in order to ensure the questions focused on understanding the rationale and structure used for the course, as well as the perceived outcomes. Appendix C contains the protocol used for the focus group.
3. *Memos:* Notes ranging from the initial meetings with WRCPC staff on June 2017 through the course development, its implementation, assessment, and reflections resulting from dialogue, and introspection to date constitute a main source of data for this research.
4. *Documentation:* Given the research objective of assessing the course adherence to conscientization principles as described by Freire (1974) a documentation review took place, in order to assess from the course planning minutes and promotional materials the intentionality of incorporating these principles. Participants enrollment forms along with

the in-session outcomes were contrasted with interview responses, seeking to assess the courses' contribution to the participant's understanding of the topics.

a. Meeting minutes provided by the coordinator of the engagement unit of the WRCPC. One from a WRCPC staff meeting, seventeen from the development of the course, four that followed each session with their strengths and opportunities assessed by the facilitators, and one assessing the course from the facilitators after the community event.
b. Promotional materials for the course, which include a description of the course and its learning goals.
c. Participants' enrollment forms, in which they indicated their motives for joining the course, the learning experience they were seeking, expectations, what they could contribute, and a summary of their knowledge about crime, justice, and prevention, and where they learned about it.
d. Course in-session outcomes (individual flip charts reporting on the groups' understanding and assumptions of crime, justice, and prevention).
e. Flip charts from the sixth session, which were presented in a gallery format, constitute a summary of the groups' learning from the course.

Procedures

A description of the course participants and how the data were collected is provided below.

Sampling strategy and recruitment

Criterion sampling (Padgett, 2012) was used for this study, looking only into the individuals who participated (N = 10) or facilitated (N = 5) the course. Participants were made

aware of the research component within the course through the registration form, and in addition were invited to participate in the research during the first session. All participants provided consent.

Participants were ensured confidentiality of their responses, following the Research Ethics Board (REB # 5511) best recommendations for confidentiality. All eight course participants agreed to be part of an audio-recorded interview, although one did not respond to the invitation for scheduling it, which left seven interviewees.

The course had a total of five facilitators. One leading the course who consulted for the WRCPC, two staff members from the WRCPC, and two guest facilitators. For the focus group, given their availability, only three facilitators participated in it (the lead and staff members, two females and one male). Course participants and facilitators ages range from their mid-twenties to their sixties.

Data collection process

One of the coordinators of the engagement unit created a binder containing the minutes and emails pertaining to the development and implementation of the course. The binder also included the enrollment forms of participants. Promotional materials of the course were obtained online and downloaded. Course in-session outcomes were provided by the lead facilitator, and pictures from the sixth session flip charts that summarized the course's key learnings were provided by the engagement unit coordinator, who also provided the course evaluations conducted by the WRCPC.

Positionality: building the case for conscientization

The idea of the linkage between knowledge and action came to me as a teenager. I was born in a middle-class family in Mexico, and although I was aware that there were people experiencing difficulties in life, I was not aware of the extent of these challenges. My dad broke it down for me. I am not sure how that conversation started but I am very certain about the effect it had on me. He shared more about his background, the impoverished conditions in which he grew up, and how education helped him pursue a different path in life. He then shared shocking figures, telling me how more than half of Mexico's population was living in poverty. At that time, there were 100 million living in Mexico; so, he was talking about more than 50 million living in poverty. How could this be? How can a country with such vast resources be failing this badly with providing for its people?

The understanding of that reality moved me into action. I began a quest into learning more, documentaries, history, and with a group of friends created a fellowship. We wanted to address these conditions and thought that if only we were to *know* how to address them, things would be better. We began looking into options for studying abroad. One thing led to the other and we were one-day sitting in the conference room of an internationally renowned company, speaking to one of their directors about our ideas. His expression and comments made me realize there was something wrong with our rationale, and that knowledge and good will were not enough to create the needed change.

Economic crisis and the need to work full time while studying put our fellowship to rest for a few years, until a quest for freedom led me to the Jesuits, who taught me about the hidden forces behind the poverty I was so concerned about. Traveling through the country, experiencing different realities, engaging in dialogue, were all fundamental in the shift I experienced. These

experiences were my first encounter to Freire's conscientization ideas and planted a seed that in years to come would influence my choosing for this approach when speaking with the WRCPC staff about the community course.

The experiences with the Jesuits motivated a career shift into the non-profit sector, with my first job at an organization seeking to develop competencies for participation and community engagement. While working with youths and adults in identifying needs in their communities that they wanted to work on, I realized there was something missing. I could not figure what it was then, but after attending a community psychology conference in 2013, I found a partial response. It seemed that there was a need to incorporate critical reflection/critical consciousness into our learning processes, so that the community projects chosen by the youth and adults could have a better impact on the root causes of the issues they were trying to address.

After the community psychology conference, I started a seminar at my university about critical community psychology. We began by having a webinar with Dr. Scot Evans and Daniela García, M.Sc., who explained their perspectives on critical community psychology and their applications. This seminar series later inspired a career shift in one of my professors, now leading a multidisciplinary community health initiative. These experiences got me to think about the relevance of critically reflecting on one's reality, listening to others and finding ways to collectively alter the reality into one that contemplates everyone's wellbeing.

Years later and at the middle of my master's program in Community Psychology at Laurier, I was thinking about potential topics for my thesis. I had completed a year's practicum at the WRCPC and was brainstorming about potential ideas for my thesis with two staff members. I mentioned I was passionate about participation and engagement, as I saw these two elements essential for social change to occur in our communities. During the conversation, they

mentioned that they had been thinking for a while about implementing a community course that could take the Porch Chat's conversations deeper. Their idea was that in order to become successful in crime prevention efforts, we needed an engaged community taking part in those efforts. A community that understands the role social development has in crime prevention. Suddenly, there was an organic merging of our interests. I could collaborate on the development of the community course, incorporating the principles of critical consciousness that I had learned before, and at the same time look at the effects that this critical reflection process could have on the participation and engagement of the course participants in their communities.

Although I initially sought Freire's work in a mechanical way, seeking to "learn" a process (conscientization) that could later be "replicated", the journey of reading and learning from his life and work has touched on my faith and beliefs. It has put me in touch with a caring, loving, and compassionate individual, that having experienced love despite the challenges of his circumstances, encouraged him to do the same through his life. I have learned that without the love and hope instilled in his life, little can be achieved by means of "replicating a method", for I need to love and be loved to endure the task of facing inequality with dignity and hope.

This is where I am coming from, my positionality. A professional who had experience organizing citizen's groups, who came to realize the importance of critical consciousness, and beyond it, the importance of love and hope in the daily interactions and dialogue that are the soil for a conscientization process to thrive.

Given my dual role in this research, as an evaluator, and also a co-facilitator, I became more embedded into the course, which I recognize influenced my perspective on its outcomes. To address this, I held meetings with three other course facilitators and participants, in which I validated the findings from this thesis, and incorporated their suggested feedback. I also checked

in with my thesis advisor regularly to get another outside perspective. My other committee members added another critical perspective.

Analysis

Acknowledging the nature of this research, situated as a case study within a community-engaged research approach, analysis of the experience occurred throughout the entire process (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2016, 2018), which began with the course development conversations in 2017, and followed the reflection conversations among course facilitators after each session. At the conclusion of the course and the community event experience, there were meetings between facilitators to assess the experience, which is also included in the analysis; in which the theory of change, as displayed in *Figure 4,* was the subject of continued scrutiny.

Memos capturing the experience with reflections from the conversations, learnings, and outcomes dating from 2017 to 2019, served as fundamental pieces for understanding the implications of this process. In analyzing the data, I first relied on the *theoretical propositions* (Yin, 2018) of the community course logic model displayed in *Figure 4.* In addition, I did a *ground-up* (Yin, 2018) work in looking at the documentation pertaining to the course development (meeting minutes), memos, and listening to the interviews and focus groups, from two to three times each in different times, identifying themes and relevant topics while doing so, and contrasting them to the conceptual maps created throughout the analysis.

In following a *ground-up* analysis I sought to understand the rationale for developing the course based on the meeting minutes available. I also reviewed the available documentation regarding our understanding of the conscientization construct, which led to an additional search for sources where the 1974 Conscientization book in Spanish was found. The additional sources

provided a clearer understanding of Freire and some of his ideas which we tried to incorporate into the course.

The coding of the interviews and focus group followed a holistic approach (Saldaña, 2013), in which patterns and themes were written and later revised in subsequent revisions of the interview recordings. Initial findings were presented to one staff member of the WRCPC in August 2019, and later in January 2020 to the three facilitators that participated in the focus group. This member checking sought to ensure that I interpreted the perspectives of the facilitators accurately and capture additional feedback to be incorporated into the research results (Padgett, 2012).

The codes used were based on the focus of interest for this research, assessing participants understanding of crime, justice, and prevention; and whether or not the course contributed in any way to it, and if there was an intent for critical action as a result. Codes also sought to capture the strengths and opportunities from the course, as well as the perceived outcomes.

In assessing the course adherence to *conscientization* I used the seven components described earlier as guidelines: (1) assuming an epistemological position, (2) continuous unveiling of reality, (3) adopting a historical consciousness and commitment, (4) assuming a utopian position and praxis, (5) coding and decoding, (6) conscientization as a never-ending process, and (7) the inherent role of love, humility, and faith, for dialogue. In assessing the presence of these components, I relied on the narratives from course participants and facilitators from the interviews, and from my personal notes.

Results

The community course sought to facilitate a collaborative learning process following a conscientization approach in order to deepen the participants' understanding of crime, justice, and prevention; this, in turn, was believed to influence their intent to act critically. The presentation of the results follows the same order: (1) adherence to conscientization in the course implementation, (2) deepened understanding of the topics and (3) intent for critical action as a result of participating in the course; and (4) strengths and opportunities identified by participants and facilitators.

1. In what ways does the community course reflect principles of conscientization methodology in the way it is conceptualized and implemented?

Adherence to conscientization's process in the course implementation was assessed by looking at the minutes from the course development (17), implementation (4), and assessment (1), along with the interviews, focus group and my memos.

Table 1

Conscientization process assessment

Conscientization elements as described by Freire	Included in the course
1. Assuming an epistemological position	Partially.
2. Continuous unveiling of reality	Yes.
3. Adopting a historical consciousness and commitment	Yes.
4. Assuming a Utopian position and praxis	Yes.
5. Coding and decoding	Yes.
6. Conscientization as a never-ending process	Partially.
7. The inherent role of love, humility, and faith	Partially.

Table 1 identifies the elements described by Freire (1974) and my assessment of the degree to which the elements were incorporated, along with a rationale for the assessment.

Assuming an epistemological position: "We decide what crime is"

Throughout the course, participants were asked to think about their own definitions and assumptions about crime, justice, and prevention, which provided an opportunity to also reflect on one's personal epistemology. From their interviews, participants reflected on how these constructs are not universal, but socially constructed, hence acknowledging that their definition is their own.

> *"…to be honest, what I think now is that crime really is a social construct. We make up what crime is, right? We decide what crime is, so crime isn't any one thing…"* [P5]
>
> *"…crime is what society says is wrong, but one society may say it's wrong and another society may say its right…"* [P1]

I consider this element partially included since beyond the recognition of the multiple views about crime, justice, and prevention, the course did not provide a space to reflect about how one's culture, family, upbringing, values, and belief system, mediate how reality is understood and perceived.

Continuous unveiling of reality: "A moving target"

Regarding the *continuous unveiling of reality*, there were intentional activities designed to question the underlying conditions of the given topic, based on the course development conversations. One of the methods discussed by the development team to accomplish this were the "*five why's."* For this, a series of *why* questions followed each provision of a given example, attempting to gain greater understanding of the specific topic. Group discussions and cases within the sessions incorporated this principle, for example, in one of the sessions there was a

group conversation about gentrification, what it is, some ideas on why it occurs, its effects on homelessness, allowing for participants to identify more ways of looking into an issue. In addition, participants responses throughout the interviews reflect an understanding of the need to continue *unveiling* their understanding of reality:

> *"The course contributed to understanding that justice is not going to be the same thing for everybody, and that maybe having it be sort of a moving target is the way to look at it, because it means that we never get complacent. Probably the key thinking about the course is to keep questioning. What is justice? Who is justice for? and keep investigating. Like if we have an answer, we probably still don't have the whole answer. Not the whole picture"* [P6]
>
> *"You need to stay curious about your definition and stay open to different media outlets or different information that you're getting in and really kind of try to the best of your ability to critically review those things"* [P5]

Adopting a historical consciousness and commitment: connecting with history through Jane Walks

In exploring the topics of crime, justice, and prevention, there was time dedicated for looking into how these concepts have changed through history: 1) actions that were at some point considered a crime and now they are not (use of marijuana for example); 2) different ways for administering justice. For example, the Jane's Walk we did during the *justice* session in which we visited the Governor's House, former home of the "gaoler", the Waterloo Region Courthouse and the Community Justice Initiatives offices, allowed for a conversation of the different possibilities in administering justice in society; and 3) attending the community events, which focused on *Restorative Justice,* allowed for identifying alternative ways for addressing crime as well as explore alternative ways for framing it, from "criminal justice system" to "social justice." Hence, *adopting a historical consciousness and commitment* is an element that I consider as included in the course.

Assuming a Utopian position and praxis: Imagining a Restorative Region

Looking into *assuming a Utopian position and praxis,* the course design included an exploration of different approaches in addressing crime, and promoting a specific approach geared towards recognizing the inequalities in society that influence crime. Hence, the course did follow the *denouncing* and *announcing* of dehumanizing and humanizing structures, embedded into the Utopian vision of Freire (1974). In addition, the course design also sought for participants to engage in practice, which later occurred through the organization of the community event. Lastly, the Justice Dinner, one of the events attended by the course participants, encouraged us to imagine Waterloo Region as a Restorative Region, hence, imagining different approaches for administering justice.

Coding and decoding: Deconstructing understandings

As for *Coding and decoding,* each of the sessions presented a topic, which represented the *code* that through dialogue became *decoded*, allowing for facilitators and participants to *unveil* some of their held assumptions about the aspect of reality that was being explored. We can see this element incorporated actively into each of the sessions. During the first session, which focused on the topic of crime, for example, participants were asked to write down their own definition of crime on a piece of paper, without including their names. The definitions were later placed onto a whiteboard for everyone to see. Those definitions would represent the *code*. Examples of those codes were:

- *Crime is an act that contravenes a law*
- *Crime is something we're told, only bad people do*
- *Behaviour that caused or could cause harm, either to individuals or to some collective - the social body or a particular group (crime as harm)*

A facilitated group conversation followed, reflecting on the definitions, values, and assumptions within them, which would constitute the process of *decoding* their own understanding of crime.

Conscientization as a never-ending process: challenged to think differently

Looking into *Conscientization as a never-ending process,* one of the course objectives was to develop skills to *critically reflect*, having the ability to assess power (privilege and oppression) and assumptions at a personal and societal level, which would aid participants in further conscientization processes beyond the course. To develop those skills, activities were included in the course that led participants to first write down their own definitions of crime, justice, and prevention, and then were encouraged to identify some of their personally held assumptions expressed in the definitions. Group conversations that followed allowed participants to think about the topics differently from their previous assumptions, which would later influence their outlook and actions in other settings:

> *"We had some really good dialogue that night… I went home and I read more articles about crime and justice than I probably have in the whole time I was in school"* [P1]

> *"I'm embarrassed to say that I was one of those individuals that got my car broken into, and would be like, "augh, why are they even doing this?" and just get frustrated when I see people laying around downtown causing disturbances. I wasn't someone helping them out. Now, I feel like I have a little bit more understanding of why people are in those situations downtown… I feel like I actually have more of a dialogue with people now, instead of just walking by"* [P1]

While participant's feedback from the interviews reflect that in other life situations they applied their critical reflection skills, which were attributed to the course, there were no further comments identified regarding the continuous need to reflect about their new understandings. For this element to be considered fully included, future implementations would need to emphasize the continuum in the critical reflection process, for example, having settled for a given path (Restorative Justice), which would need to be revised and reflected upon as well.

The inherent role of love, humility, and faith: be kind to each other

Finally, for the *inherent role of love, humility, and faith,* this element is considered to be *partially* present in the course development and implementation. From the planning meetings to the implementation sessions we were intentional in creating a respectful atmosphere for sharing and reflecting. Several authors also encouraged fostering a dialogue that seeks to better understand one another (Goodman, 2011; Kagan et al., 2011). The first activity of the course, following the introduction and icebreaker, was a conversation about the agreements that as a group we felt were relevant to foster a respectful and caring environment. The group agreements were:

- Everyone is encouraged to participate
- We're here to learn - it's okay to not know and to ask questions
- Sense of humour is welcome
- Be kind to each other
- Respect for each other and for those not here
- Speaking what is on one's mind in a respectful manner
- Keep confidentiality – we agree to not share identifying or personal information – but can share high level learnings
- Take care of yourself

These were later ratified at the beginning of the second session of the course. In addition, the setting of the room allowed for better interactions with one another, sitting in small circles, and fostering dialogue:

> *"I've never actually sat in a circle with people and had to stare eye to eye with my classmates, so it really makes you think instead of just drifting off into space, it makes you stay focused on the project at hand. Because when you are in a classroom style, your're kind of like looking around and your mind's drifting, but here you're in a circle and you are kind of forced to be in the present instead of in the past or in the future. Not trying to get philosophical on you but I am just trying to say it really makes you think, you can't just stare of into space, you know that you're actually getting the person's attention"* [P1]

Caring for the group agreements and the room setup, which facilitated integration, are elements that contribute to a *loving* atmosphere for caring and respecting one another. In addition, snack breaks during each session facilitated more spaces for integration and dialogue.

Another element that is seen to be present is *faith*, which is to believe in the capacity to transform our reality into a more just world. Participants welcomed different approaches within the justice system and became inspired by the restorative approach:

> *"The highlight for me in was the connection with the women's prison and the stones (activity) and the presentation of restorative justice and being a restorative community, it was really very inspiring for me. I think the other highlight for me was getting to engage in conversations with people who were all wanting to experience and understand our system in a different way. So being in a collective place where people were open to dialogue, open to challenging each other's…there is not a lot of time in your day where you get to be in that place where you meet people who are all wanting to just think differently, and we're open to hearing and challenging their assumptions and beliefs*" [P4]

In regard to *humility,* there were not enough conversations about it in the course development or implementation, which is why the component of *love, humility, and faith* is considered only partially incorporated. Future course implementations would benefit from emphasizing the value of each participant's lived experiences and understandings, equal to those of formal education or work experiences.

a. What barriers or what challenges did the workshop facilitators and participants experience in applying conscientization methodology?

Delimiting the scope of the topics.

The first challenge faced by the course facilitators was that the specific conscientization elements mentioned in this document were not clearly identified from the beginning. In looking for a model for facilitating a conscientization process, the course facilitators and I had difficulties

identifying a clearly laid out process for implementation, and resorted to various sources to do so, from Stephen Brookfield (2016), Diane Goodman (2011), Carolyn Kagan et al. (2011), and Hugh Butcher (2007).

In addition, the variety of the topics covered (crime, justice, and prevention), as well as the multiple resources utilized (articles, presentations, events, video cases, etc.), created a broad scope, which became difficult to *decode*, given a time constraint. Conversations about shortening the topics or activities was ongoing. Similarly, course participants mentioned the need to have more time to engage in conversations with others, even suggesting extending the course duration in order to have enough time to do so. Future implementations would benefit from delimiting the scope of the topics, focusing on a case, a book, or a proposed experience that could be explored in detail by the participants.

> *"Sometimes I wish we'd had more discussion about the readings, because sometimes I was like, Oh, I have all of these thoughts and ideas that I want to bring it up"* [P6]

Grounded codes

In addition, while group diversity was a positive factor for the course, it posed a challenge in facilitating a conversation, that met the learning needs of each of the participants. While some asked for a deeper conversation about the issues, others expressed feeling intimidated by the knowledge or job titles of others. Facilitators acknowledged this challenge, in addition to recognizing how some of the conversations felt higher level and less grounded. A suggestion brought forward to address this was to change the *code*, and to use a guiding experience, situation, or book, that could better connect the topics to each individuals' experiences:

> *"We also talked about having a more specific or grounding concept to guide the course and tie it together, like a book that we all read, which explores the issues or particular concept, or idea or something, just to help tie it together and ground it. It did feel like we were pretty high level conceptual sometimes that it would've been nice to have a common story"* [F2]

2. What elements were identified as relevant to the participants and facilitators of the course in the process for deepening an understanding of crime, justice, and prevention (incorporating how power and inequality shape those realities)?

Learning circles

From the variety of elements incorporated into the course, the experiential ones were deemed as the most significant by the participants. Participants highlighted the value of the group conversations about the topics, specially in a diverse group.

> *"I would say it's the conversations that we had and the challenging questions and the different ways of thinking um so people sharing their stories and people giving examples of what about this or those kinds of things… it's the combination of being introduced to new ways of thinking or challenging your own core beliefs and then having dialogue about it"* [P4]

Experiences from others

Participants also emphasized how the community events (Stride Symposium and Justice Dinner) were fundamental in understanding realities unknown to them. An example of that are the experiences shared by women formerly incarcerated, including the difficulties experienced in and out of the judiciary system, especially regarding the reintegration into society:

> *"I went to the to the one-day presentation from the women's prison… that to me, was something new…it helped clarify the picture for me of what's going on in prisons as a part of our so-called justice system"* [P3]

History and meaning-making

Beyond the community events, participants outlined the value of the Jane Walk conducted on the day of the topic of justice (see section: *About the Community Course*), because it allowed for a vivid understanding of how justice is being delivered and some of the rationales for these approaches. In addition, participants also referred to (1) the articles that were handed to them at the end of each session and (2) the presentation on prevention. Participants outlined how the articles allowed for a deeper understanding of the discussed topics, which was later referred to as a change in how certain realities were understood:

> *"I think the articles and the things that help people to be thinking and processing beforehand so that you kind of have your own process is a really critical piece and having different articles that meet different peoples"* [P4]
>
> *"I think the readings on root causes, I think really helped me name the things that I was thinking about"* [P6]

Beyond the regular understanding

The prevention presentation, led by David Siladi, a knowledge mobilization specialist at the WRCPC, was mentioned by the course participants as something that helped challenge their held assumptions about prevention, and reflect about the topic in ways they had not reflected on it before, such as considering it to be a value-driven guiding principle.

> *"I think David's presentation took prevention for me to a higher level than I would have focused on…it just contributed to a conversation about places and spaces where you could do things really differently if you had a prevention focus"* [P4]
>
> *"I really liked doing real life examples that look in our community…that really helps understand how prevention might look like or what that might look like to me"* [P5]

3. In what ways does the community course contribute to the development of critical consciousness related to crime prevention through social development?

The community course provided a space for dialogue and reflection on the topics of crime, justice, and prevention. In addition, the community events allowed participants to learn from the experiences of others, opening up new understandings. Research question # 3 above is broken down into two sub-questions, which explore the (a) role of the course in deepening participants understanding of crime, justice, and prevention; and (b) assessing if their understanding incorporates the social development approach to crime prevention.

Acknowledgement of the complexities

Regarding participant's crime understanding, one of the outcomes of their reflections was the realization of the complexity of defining crime:

> *"I feel like I'm back in that course. It's a really hard answer to answer, because what I consider a crime may not be considered a crime by someone else. You know, it's kind of hard to define because it may be a crime, but at the same time you have to understand why the person's done that. So that's it was something I really struggled with during the course, identifying what is crime, because it may be a crime but the person has a reason why they've done it. It's a really hard question. What is crime? Crime is what society says is wrong, but one society may say it's wrong and another society may say its right"* [P1]

> *"I guess what I'm saying is that depending on the context and depending who you are, sometimes x behavior is a crime. And sometimes it is not"* [P3]

> *"…so when I tried to think of the definition of crime in my little brain I don't know what it is. And to be honest, what I think now is that crime really is a social construct…*" [P5]

In addition, the definitions participants provided reflect an emphasis on the context and on understanding the conditions that contribute to an individual committing a crime. These are elements of the social development approach to crime prevention.

a. Did participants deepen their understanding of crime, justice, and prevention through participation in the course?

Assimilating different perspectives

During the first session of the course, the participants were asked to write down their own definition for *crime.* In doing so, the definitions revolved around behaviours or actions that cause harm, or that are against the established normative agreements in society:

> *"Behaviour that violates the norms of society or more simply, antisocial behaviour"*
> *"Crime is an act that breaks the established laws of society"*
> *"Anything that contravenes the Criminal Code of Canada"*

The crime definitions provided during the interviews reflect the complexity of the topic, going beyond behaviours and actions, and looking into the embedded structural components:

> *"I think crime is an indication of needs that are not being met. So instead of it being a personal or an individual thing, I think it's indicative of how society is not built to meet the needs of people"* [P6].

Participants were asked if the course contributed in any way to their referred understanding of crime, and six mentioned it did. For example, one participant [P1] described that *"There are certain themes that I definitely didn't think about that kind of challenge my thinking, definitely was difficult at times because I guess I never thought about it before"* Another participant [P4] reflected on the course's impact on their understanding of justice: *"It has changed my understanding of justice...it's really broadened it to honestly think to myself what is justice? what is it right?...it's really challenged me to think differently"*

The other four participants described similar types of impact on their understanding of these core concepts.

Acknowledging privilege

Participants also referred to the course contribution in acknowledging their privilege and how it shaped their views of reality:

> *I really didn't know the difference in sentencing between cocaine and crack cocaine and how that impacts so many people's lives at the time. And I didn't know anything about it because I am at such a privilege state in my life. I think [the course] impacted me in a way that makes me want to learn more about it, about things that I might not already know* [P5]

b. In what ways does that shift in understanding reflect critical consciousness related to crime prevention through social development?

Looking beyond the perceived reality

Critical consciousness related to crime prevention through social development would involve an understanding of the structural components involved in the occurrence of crime, reflected in participant's responses:

> *"...it's really challenged me to think differently, it's interesting as we think about the opioid crisis or legalizing marijuana. I met with a group of newcomer parents who talked about how legalizing marijuana is going to really impact and marginalize their population further with stigmatization and all of those things. And we had a whole conversation about why would that be? And they're thinking around whose locker's do you think you're gonna get checked? And who's this? All of these things that I hadn't really thought of, but when I started to take the course, it really started to challenge me on what if we didn't have jails? And what if we didn't have these?"* [P4]

Additionally, participants referred to the need to continue *unveiling* the information they interact with:

> *"I think sometimes it really makes me think twice. Maybe when I'm reading a news article about the validity of that or where that comes from or what is behind those things, if it's about crime or prevention or something like that, you know, like trying to really look past maybe what the information is that's just given to us, right?"* [P5]

And practical day to day experiences acquired a different meaning:

> *"I think I'm picking up a bit more realistic approach now. Before, I would always be like, oh, there's reasons why people do things, but now I'm really questioning why we've done those things, rather than be a generalized answer, on why people do things, now I'm really, really thinking, and I never knew much about restorative justice before I've done that course. And so that's led me to other articles and understanding crime or justice a little bit better"* [P1]

The course was referred to as having influenced participants' understanding, attitudes, or actions; and mentioned how the group conversations enhanced their views on the topics:

> *"I mean, there are certain themes that I definitely didn't think about that kind of challenge my thinking, definitely was difficult at times because I guess I never thought about it before, and I think I was forced to think about stuff that I would have normally never thought about it. There is my privilege there, you know?"* [P1]

In summary, the implementation of the community course adhered to the identified conditions of the conscientization process outlined by Freire (1974), having incorporated four of the seven conditions, while the other three were partially incorporated.

The majority of the course participants mentioned how the course contributed to deepening their understanding of crime, justice, and/or prevention, and credited their participation in the course for thinking differently, and sometimes engaging differently in their work or volunteer settings in relation to the course topics.

Participants outlined the *relational* components of the course as the most significant in furthering their understanding, such as the group conversation, and the community events.

Two years later

Upon the conclusion of this thesis document, I approached the participants seeking to meet with them to present the results and gather feedback from them. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, we met on Zoom. Four participants were present, and two excused themselves for being unavailable. One participant did not respond to the invitation.

Participants were eager to learn about the results from the thesis, and happy to see each other again after two years of completing the course. Following the presentation of the thesis results participants expressed an appreciation for "seeing the whole picture", having now a comprehensive background of the rationale for developing the course, a refresher of the course objectives, and the outcomes as reported by my thesis.

Some participants mentioned that the course was difficult, although reflecting in the end having made contributions to their community engagement; one participant mentioning volunteering at a prison as a result from their participation on the course. Another participant mentioned having a social justice coordination role and linked it to their experiences on the community course.

Overall participants agreed and resonated with the results reported on this thesis document. A survey link was sent to the participants for them to provide anonymous feedback should they choose to, and a month after the link was sent no responses were recorded on it. One participant chose to edit one of their quotes for conciseness.

Discussion

The community course sought to facilitate a *critical reflection* process on the topics of crime, justice, and prevention, by exploring how participants understood the topics, their embedded assumptions, and facilitating a group conversation in order to assimilate different perspectives. In addition, community events and field activities sought to connect participants with the realities they were considering. Two main elements are discussed in this section: (1) the process that was followed to facilitate the course and its adherence to conscientization components, and (2) the perceived outcomes from course participants.

Regarding the process, the most common components identified in conscientization are (1) critical reflection, (2) political efficacy, and (3) critical action (Jemal, 2017; Watts et al., 2011), and there is no consensus in how the construct is defined and operationalized (Jemal, 2017); in addition "methods directly related to conscientization, specifically generated to produce that process are difficult to find, if nonexistent" (Montero, 2009, p. 74). One of the contributions from this thesis has been to identify and emphasize the seven components outlined by Freire (1974) embedded into conscientization: (1) assuming an epistemological position, (2) continuous unveiling of reality, (3) adopting a historical consciousness and commitment, (4) assuming a utopian position and praxis, (5) coding and decoding, (6) conscientization as a never-ending process, and (7) the inherent role of love, humility, and faith, for dialogue.

By reviewing the documentation pertaining to the course development and implementation, and examining the comments from participants and facilitators, four components were deemed fully present in the course, while the remaining three were considered partially present. The main challenge in incorporating them all was that at the time of developing and implementing the course, we were not fully aware of these. Future group processes that aim to transform their realities by means of conscientization could benefit from incorporating them early on.

While on this journey, I had the opportunity of expressing my concerns about the lack of clarity for facilitating a conscientization process to Dr. Roderick J. Watts (personal communication, June 28, 2019) who encouraged me to take the action, reflect about it, and allow for the experience to become the one that shows the path. This is perhaps the way Freire intended it to be, for *conscientization* not to be understood as a methodology or process to implement, but as a journey that each should conduct and assess. A similar assessment is made by Araújo Freire

and Macedo (2000) encouraging us not to reduce Freire to a method, and quote a conversation with him:

> Donaldo, I don't want to be imported or exported. It is impossible to export pedagogical practices without reinventing them. Please tell your fellow American educators not to import me. Ask them to re-create and rewrite my ideas (Ana María Araújo Freire & Macedo, 2000, p. 6).

While the identified conditions should serve as relevant elements to consider, they should not be seen as a recipe.

In accordance to Freire's encouragement, we learned from this process an understanding of the fundamental *relational* aspect of conscientization, which transcends the *rational* aspect that seemed to have emphasized, for example, a focus on participant's understandings, instead of how we relate, connect, learn, and work with one another. In accordance to these findings, Dr. Antonia Darder (2015) encourages us to acknowledge Freire's pedagogy as a pedagogy of love, recognizing love as the driving force which connects us with one another, making social transformation possible:

> Love constitutes an intentional spiritual act of consciousness that emerges and matures through our social and material practices, as we work to live, learn, and labour together…(Darder, 2015, p. 49). Democracy and the solidarity necessary for the evolution are made possible through a pedagogy fortified by a universal regard for the dignity and equality of all human beings, no matter their cultural differences or their economic circumstances. Such unity does not require uniformity or assimilation but rather a shared political vision for a more just world (Darder, 2018, 12'34").

Regarding the identified outcomes resulting from participating in the course, a deepened understanding on the topics of crime, justice, and prevention was referred to by the interviewed participants. They emphasized the *relational* aspects as the most relevant such as the group conversations, and the events where they heard, learned, and interacted with others about their own lived experiences.

The most relevant findings from this thesis are the acknowledgement of how close contact with *others* like the women who shared their reality and struggle going out from prison at the CJI's Stride Symposium, is needed for shifting one's view of reality, and in turn the response to it. In addition, facilitating a dialogue that is fueled by *love* in one another and in humankind, conducted with *humility*, respecting each other's lived experiences and understandings without privileging one's status, titles, or knowledge; and having faith in our collective capacity to transform our society for the better, are all needed conditions for that transformation to occur. The polarization in which we live in, is in desperate need for a dialogue fueled by *love*, *humility*, and *faith*; instead of arguments that seek to discredit one another.

In summary, learning circles, assimilating the experiences of others, acknowledging historical changes, and looking at reality from different perspectives were all contributing factors for a deeper understanding of the topics of crime, justice, and prevention. Some of the challenges reported related to the scope of the topics, which would seek to be resolved in future implementations by delimitating them to significant aspects of a known reality for participants, for example, in Waterloo Region, focusing on a case study such as the reactions to safe injection sites.

At a broader scale, recognizing the components described by Freire (1974) when facilitating conscientization processes should enrich the experience, as it provides elements to

focus on that were not discussed before. For example, emphasizing a dialogue that centers on humility, hope, and faith could aid in bridging the polarization experienced in many parts of the world. A humility that acknowledges that there is more than the reality that I conceive, that reality is complex, that my vision is acute, and that I need to incorporate other's perspective to grasp a better view of reality. This all comes from embracing the components earlier described by Freire, possible by a love for humanity and faith that a better world is possible.

Limitations

The course focused on a particular group known as the Friends of Crime Prevention, who have expressed an interest in learning about crime prevention initiatives and having conversations with others about it. It would be relevant to assess if a community course following a conscientization process would have similar effects in groups that are not as invested in preventing crime.

Future conscientization processes might want to consider some of these findings and focus on grounding their process into their own experiences, and the resulting learnings that derive from it. Grounding would refer to addressing the topics from a closely related experience of the participants. For example, since this course was implemented in the Region of Waterloo, a potential topic of interest could be the Consumption and Treatment Services (CTS) also known as safe injection sites. Exploring this topic in detail could better frame participants' assumptions about drug use, criminalization, marginalization, and the public health and community role in addressing it. Furthermore, a specific action identified by the course to address a specific situation discussed could better enhance participants' critical action.

The reported outcomes from participants relied primarily on their self-assessments, and a comparison into how they defined crime before and after their participation in the course. Future

implementations could benefit from different methods for assessing the effects, especially those that do not rely as heavily on definitions, such as essays based on scenarios. In addition, identifying and implementing an adequate Critical Consciousness scale before and after the course implementation could help address the self-assessment limitation.

In addition, the case study approach of this research brings other limitations such as the small number of research participants, bounded by the number of course participants; and given the nature of the case (unique), there were no comparison cases to report on. Similarly, my close involvement with the case, and the WRCPC pose another limitation, with my roles in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the course. To counteract these limitations, coding and analysis of the data were reviewed with my thesis supervisor and committee, and with participants through member checks. The different roles I held in this case also provided unique strengths, such as the closeness with the community leading the course, which resulted in a unique position to understand the need and rationale for the course, while observing first hand the implementation and the outcomes for the participants.

Conclusions

Following the recommendation of a good mentor, I would like to use the *What? So What?* and *Now what?* process to refer to what this community course experience provided.

What?

Acknowledging the harm that crime generates for victims, perpetrators, and the society at large, it becomes significant to engage in preventive measures. Crime prevention approaches are influenced by how crime is understood, and as crime theories abound, so do crime prevention approaches. Some of these approaches place their focus on the individual, their context, or the

opportunity for a crime to occur. Crime prevention through social development (CPSD) is a distinctive approach that acknowledges that crime is also influenced by a lack of access to basic human needs such as housing, food, health, employment, livable wages, and a caring a nurturing environment to name a few.

The community course developed and implemented by the WRCPC sought to contribute in the furtherance of CPSD, by means of participants critically reflecting about their understanding of crime, justice, prevention, and the roles that power and inequality play in how these constructs are understood and enforced. It was believed that critical reflection would in turn lead to critical action, hence, furthering the efforts to prevent crime from a social development perspective.

So what?

The community course provided a rich experience throughout seven sessions, one field trip, and one community event. The majority of course participants acknowledged the contribution of the community course in furthering and reflecting on their notions of crime, justice, and prevention. Some of them provided examples of how these understandings led to different reactions in their day to day experiences or places of employment.

The group conversation circles, and reflective articles were referred to as contributors in enhancing or reinforcing participants understanding of crime, justice, and prevention. The experiential-focused events, such as the Stride Symposium by Community Justice Initiatives, the Justice Dinner and the Jane Walks were identified as more significant for deepening participants understanding of crime, justice, and prevention, leading to different ways of reacting in life.

Some of the reported challenges from implementing such a novel course approach were the lack of resources available that defined a clear path for conducting a conscientization process, the scope of the topics reviewed, and the different experiences and understandings brought forward by the diverse group of participants.

Now What?

Community courses such as the one led by the WRCPC offer a unique experience for participants to become aware of the different circumstances that lead to crime, as well as to better understand how the justice system responds, and the different alternatives available, such as the restorative justice approach. Awareness of these realities was achieved as a group, in conversations, learning from one another, listening to *others* whose life experiences speak to a challenging and not commonly understood reality, such as the women leaving prison and not finding enough supportive structures in society for integrating into community life.

Polarization abounds these days and an "*us* vs. *them*" approach seems to be the initial reaction, bringing forward evidence, debunking arguments, seeking to prove who is right or wrong. A *conscientization* process provides an opportunity to reflect about the different and unique perspectives each of us have of reality, and to become hopeful in acknowledging the possibilities that we have collectively to transform it into an inclusive, more humane reality.

A different understanding of reality resulting from a conscientization process becomes essential in order to generate the equity conditions in society for every person to thrive by having access to resources to meet the fundamental human needs such as housing, food, health, employment, liveable wages, and a caring and nurturing environment. This different understanding needs to go beyond a rational exercise, towards a relational experience, such as

the conversation circles, Jane Walks, and community events that took place in the community course.

Acknowledging that *dialogue* is the main vehicle in conducting a conscientization process, it becomes essential for it to be fuelled by participants' love, humility, and faith, as Freire (2005) noted. Practical ways of doing so begin by acknowledging each other's dignity just by their condition of being human, and not of their titles or seniority. Doing so, sets the space for a humble dialogue. Learning from one another's hopes and dreams and nurturing the mutual possibilities for achieving them would in turn contribute for faith to flourish. The imagination of the possible, and compassionate dialogue with others has the capacity to unveil unexplored alternatives. A utopian world ahead led by a compassionate understanding instead of a forceful imposition of wills, lies ahead, and conscientization has that transformational capacity.

Postface

I had a fixed idea of how this thesis would go about. I had some notions of what *conscientization* entailed, but it was not until I accepted that I was lost that I started to learn. I could not understand some of Freire's writings in English, and it was only when I learned that I could get any book I needed from the library that I decided to get the Spanish versions of these texts. Even then it was hard to grasp the meaning, and I would sometimes spend a day with just one page, consulting various dictionaries. I began to draw these ideas, and only then, would I start to get a better sense of them. I needed and still need humility to continuously accept that I have a lot to learn.

Utopia is a big word, and to think that the path to it is carved with humility, faith, and love, is inspiring for me. It does not come about naturally; it is counter intuitive. Self-

preservation stands in the way, promoting a way of living that is destructive to self and *others.* But self is not all-mighty. COVID-19 is questioning our guiding values. Do we value capital? Profit-making? Life? Every life counts—the life of the homeless, the refugee, the cleaning and grocery store staff, the medical staff. Every life counts. My inspiration from this learning journey is the hope that *Utopia* is possible, and it begins in my house, in recognizing with honesty my short-comings, and making amends. For once, I begin to recognize *another*, I begin to walk a path that leads to love and a hopeful future. It is counter intuitive. It does not come naturally. The transformation that begins in the heart needs seeking. "…*For everyone who seeks shall find…*" (Matthew 7, 10).

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Appendix A: Acronyms

CPSD – Crime prevention through social development

The course – Community course *Reframing Crime, Justice, and Prevention* developed by the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council

WRCPC – Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council

Appendix B: Qualitative Interview Protocol for Course Participants

Critical reflection processes and their role in participation and engagement
Qualitative Interview Protocol
REB # 5511
Primary Investigator: Carlos Luis Zatarain
luis6080@mylauerier.ca

Good (morning, afternoon, night; name). Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to explore your experiences with the course *Reframing Crime, Justice and Prevention.* Specifically, we are looking at your understanding of crime, justice, and prevention, and how the course contributed (or not) to that understanding. Additionally, we are interested in learning what specific factors might have contributed to your learning, what might have hindered your learning, as well as any effects participating in the course may have had on you.

This interview will be audio recorded with your permission and then transcribed into text. After we transcribe your interview any information that could potentially identify you will be removed from the document, following standard de-identification procedures. Feel free to ask me any questions at any point during the interview. We can also pause the recording if you would like to clarify anything off the record. I will let you know at the end of the interview when I have stopped recording.

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. I'd like to hear about your experiences, whether positive or negative. Please don't feel rushed. Take the time you need to think before answering the questions. Also, if you want me to repeat any questions, just let me know.

Do you have any questions or comments before I start recording?

[Wait for response and respond to any questions]

Do I have your permission to record this interview? This recording will be destroyed upon completion of this study by December 31st, 2018.

[Turn on recorder if permission is granted]

Opening question

Before I begin asking you more specific questions, I was wondering if you could share with me more generally how the course has impacted you in regard to your understanding, your attitudes, your actions, or any other way?

Topic: Crime

Now, I will be asking a few questions about crime.

1. How would you define crime?
2. Here is a list of participants definitions of crime, as provided on the first session of the course. Can you locate the definition you provided?
    a. Is there a change from the definition you provided a few moments ago?
    b. If there is a change, what would you attribute this change to?
    c. In what way, if any, did the course Reframing Crime, Justice and Prevention contribute to your understanding of crime or changed your understanding of it?
3. Here is a list of participants brainstorming of assumptions regarding crime. Could you identify the assumptions you brought forward that day?
    a. **If yes:** would you consider that the course contributed to examine your assumptions about crime? In what way?

i. **If no:** could you identify some assumptions you had about crime before entering the community course?

ii. Would you consider that the course contributed to examine your assumptions about crime? In what way?

b. What process would you identify is needed to examine your own assumptions?

4. Were there specific course activities or discussion that contributed more to your current understanding of crime? If so, please explain what those are and how they contributed to your current understanding?
5. What changes have you seen or expect to see (since the course started) in how you view crime in the context of your paid or volunteer work or your life more generally? How do you think the course might have played a role in these changes?

Topic: Justice

6. How would you define justice?
7. In what way, if any, did the course *Reframing Crime, Justice and Prevention* contribute to your understanding of justice or changed your understanding of it?
    a. What was your understanding of justice before taking the course?
8. Here is a list of participants brainstorming of assumptions regarding justice. Could you identify the assumptions you brought forward that day?
    a. **If yes:** would you consider that the course contributed to examine your assumptions about justice? In what way?
        i. **If no:** could you identify some assumptions you had about justice before entering the community course?

ii. Would you consider that the course contributed to examine your assumptions about justice? In what way?

b. What process would you identify is needed to examine your own assumptions?

9. Were there specific course activities or discussion that contributed more to your current understanding of justice? If so, please explain what those are and how they contributed to your current understanding?
10. What changes have you seen or expect to see (since the course started) in how you view and approach justice in the context of your paid or volunteer work or your life more generally? How do you think the course might have played a role in these changes?

Topic: Prevention

11. How would you define prevention?
12. In what way, if any, did the course *Reframing Crime, Justice and Prevention* contribute to your understanding of prevention or changed your understanding of it?
    a. What was your understanding of prevention before taking the course?
13. Here is a list of participants brainstorming of assumptions regarding prevention. Could you identify the assumptions you brought forward that day?
    a. If yes: would you consider that the course contributed to examine your assumptions about prevention? In what way?
    b. If no: could you identify some assumptions you had about prevention before entering the community course?
    c. Would you consider that the course contributed to examine your assumptions about prevention? In what way?

d. What process would you identify is needed to examine your own assumptions?

14. Were there specific course activities or discussion that contributed more to your current understanding of prevention? If so, please explain what those are and how they contributed to your current understanding?
15. What changes have you seen or expect to see (since the course started) in how you view and approach prevention in the context of your paid or volunteer work or your life more generally? How do you think the course might have played a role in these changes?

Topic: Course facilitation

16. If we would hire you as a consultant to help us improve this course, what kind of things would you definitely recommend keeping and what would you recommend dropping or changing?
17. What was the highlight in this course for you?
18. What could have been done differently to facilitate a deeper understanding of the issues or a more critical intent or critical action to occur?

Topic: Community event

19. What are your overall impressions from the community event you organized at the Kitchener Public Library?
20. What was the purpose of the event?
21. Were there any challenges in achieving that purpose?
22. What would you attribute these challenges to?
23. How would you propose to address these?

Topic: reactions to statements

24. How do you feel about the following statements? What is your initial reaction?
    a. As a result of the course, I was able to identify some of my own assumptions about crime, justice or prevention where I could apply critical reflection skills to further examine them.
    b. As a result of the course, I can think of community issues in a different way based on the insights and learning experiences of the course participants and facilitators.
    c. As a result of the course, I gained knowledge about how critical reflection can be used to examine societal and my own assumptions, biases and beliefs.
    d. Learning and reflection fostered by the course would contribute to building our community capacity for social change.

Thank you for sharing your experiences with me. Thinking about what we've talked about so far, are there any important things that would help us understand how the course impacted you and your understanding of these topics? *[Pause for response. Address any topics raised by the participant]*. Do you have any general comments you would like to make or questions you'd like to ask? *[Pause for response. Address any comments or questions as needed]*.

Thanks again for your participation. I will now turn off the recorder.
[Turn off recorder].

Now that the recorder is turned off, do you have any questions you'd like to ask off the record? *[Pause for response. Address any comments or questions as needed]*.

Thank you very much,

[End]

Appendix C: Qualitative Focus Group Protocol for Course Facilitators

Critical reflection processes and their role in participation and engagement
Qualitative Interview Protocol
REB # 5511
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Good (morning, afternoon, night; everyone). Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this focus group. The purpose of this focus group is to talk about your experiences in developing and implementing the course *Reframing Crime, Justice and Prevention*.

This focus group will be audio recorded and then transcribed into text. After we transcribe the focus group all information that could identify you will be removed from the document. Feel free to ask me any questions at any point during the focus group. We can also pause the recording if you would like to clarify anything off the record. I will let you know at the end of the focus group when I have stopped recording.

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. I'd like to hear about your experiences, whether positive or negative. Please don't feel rushed. Take the time you need to think before answering the questions. Also, if you want me to repeat any questions, just let me know.

Do you have any questions or comments before I start recording?

[Wait for response and respond to any questions]

I'm going to turn on the recorder now.

[Turn on recorder]

1. **Topic: Community course objectives and outcomes**

a. **What were you hoping** to achieve by developing and implementing a community course on *Reframing Crime, Justice and Prevention?*
b. **How were you hoping** to achieve that?
c. What do you **think was achieved** with the community course?
    i. Would you say the participants have a different notion of crime, justice and prevention, as a result of participating in the course? If so, why do you think there is a difference?
    ii. Was there any **process, method, activity or discussion** that you consider **contributed in altering** the participants views around crime, prevention and justice?
    iii. [In the case there was a mention to modifications in participants views around crime, prevention and justice] **What are some of the applications that you see** in having a different view to crime, prevention and justice for the participants?
d. **What** do you consider **worked well** in the implementation of the course?
    i. Was there any specific method or activity that contributed to it? (to what worked well).

2. **Topic: Community course challenges and suggestions**

a. What were some of the **challenges that you faced** while creating and implementing the community course?
b. **What do you consider didn't worked well** in the implementation of the course?
    i. Was there any specific method or activity that contributed to it? (to what didn't work well).
c. **What do you consider could be improved** in future implementations of the course?
    i. Was there any specific method or activity that should be modified to address what could be improved?
d. What **changes would you suggest** if the course were to be implemented again in the future?

3. **Topic: Facilitators notions of crime, justice and prevention**

Let's begin by talking about this group's understanding of the core concepts in this course and how the course has impact you as facilitators. This will help putting the remaining questions into context.

a. What does crime mean to you?
b. What does justice mean to you?
c. What does prevention mean to you?
d. To what degree and how has your involvement with the community course impacted your current understanding of crime, justice and prevention?
e. What changes have you seen or expect to see (since the course started) in how you view crime, justice, and prevention in the context of your paid or volunteer work or your life more generally? How do you think the course might have played a role in these changes?

Thank you for sharing your experiences with me. Thinking about what we've talked about so far, are there any important things that have been left out? *[Pause for response. Address any topics raised by the participants]*. Do you have any general comments you would like to make or questions you'd like to ask? *[Pause for response. Address any comments or questions as needed]*.

Thanks again for your participation. I will now turn off the recorder.

[Turn off recorder].

Now that the recorder is turned off, do you have any questions you'd like to ask off the record? *[Pause for response. Address any comments or questions as needed]*.

Thank you very much,

[End]

Appendix D: TCPS 2 Certificate

PANEL ON RESEARCH ETHICS
Navigating the ethics of human research

TCPS 2: CORE

Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Carlos Luis Zatarain

has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement:
Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans
Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)

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